

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 03085

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: FR, PINT
SUBJECT: ELECTION OF THE MAYOR OF PARIS: TECHNICALITIES

SUMMARY: BECAUSE OF VOTING TECHNICALITIES ON THE MUNI-
CIPAL COUNCIL OF PARIS, THE EXPECTED ELECTION OF JACQUES
CHIRAC TO THE COUNCIL DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY ENSURE HIS
BECOMING MAYOR. DESPITE THE EXISTENCE OF A NUMBER OF
FACTORS THAT COULD WORK AGAINST HIM HOWEVER, POLITICAL
CIRCLES, BOTH PRO- AND ANTI-CHIRAC, ARE GENERALLY FORCED
TO CONCEDE THAT AS THINGS NOW STAND HE IS THE BEST BET
FOR BECOMING MAYOR. THE MODIFICATION OF TOWN HALL
STATUTES WILL HAVE LITTLE DIRECT EFFECT EITHER WAY ON
CHIRAC'S CHANCES. MEANWHILE THE STORM IN THE MAJORITY
SEEMS TO HAVE ENTERED A LULL. THE CANDIDATES MAYBE
HAVEN'T KISSED BUT THEY APPEAR TO BE AVOIDING INVECTIVE,
AND BOTH D'ORNANO AND CHIRAC ARE SETTLING DOWN TO THE
HARD BUSINESS OF CAMPAIGNING. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE CURRENT STATUS: THERE ARE CURRENTLY 90 MUNICIPAL
COUNSELORS IN PARIS AT THE HOTEL DE VILLE, ELECTED DUR-
ING THE LAST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN 1971 FOR A PERIOD
OF SIX YEARS. OF THESE 90, 30 ARE IN THE OPPOSITION,
ONE IS "ELSEWHERE" AS A JOBERTISTE AND 59 ARE IN THE
MAJORITY. OF THESE 59, 40 ARE EITHER IN THE RPR OR
SUPPORTING CHIRAC. THE NUMBER OF MUNICIPAL COUNSELORS

FROM A SECTOR IS OSTENSIBLY BASED ON THE POPULATION OF THAT SECTOR, THOUGH BECAUSE OF GERRYMANDERING THAT FAVORS THE MAJORITY, THE UNITED LEFT IS CURRENTLY UNDERREPRESENTED IN SOME SECTORS. NOTE: THERE ARE 18 SECTORS IN PARIS; EACH SECTOR COVERS ONE ARRONDISSEMENT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FIRST SECTOR (WHICH INCLUDES THE FIRST AND THE FOURTH ARRONDISSEMENTS) AND THE SECOND SECTOR (WHICH INCLUDES THE SECOND AND THIRD ARRONDISSEMENTS). THUS FOR EXAMPLE THE 14TH SECTOR IS REALLY THE 16TH ARRONDISSEMENT. THERE ARE 31 LEGISLATIVE CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS IN THE PARIS AREA, EACH REPRESENTED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY A SINGLE DEPUTY. MANY DEPUTIES DOUBLE AS MUNICIPAL COUNSELORS. 24 OF THE 31 DEPUTIES ARE IN THE MAJORITY AND 18 OF THEM SUPPORT JACQUES CHIRAC. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE 12 SENATORS FROM THE PARIS REGION, 7 OF THEM IN THE MAJORITY AND 5 OF THESE 7 SUPPORTING CHIRAC.

2. MODIFICATION OF STATUTES: FOR THE MARCH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS THE NUMBER OF COUNSELORS AT THE HOTEL DE VILLE WILL BE INCREASED FROM 90 TO 109. ON A PURELY ARITHMETICAL BASIS, ASSUMING THE LEFT RECAPTURES THE FIVE SECTORS IT NOW HOLDS, ITS NUMBER OF SEATS WILL JUMP FROM 30 TO 36. THE NUMBER OF SEATS IN THE MAJORITY UNDER THE SAME CONDITIONS WOULD JUMP FROM 60 TO 73. THE INCREASE IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MUNICIPAL COUNSELORS IS DUE NOT SO MUCH TO ANY INCREASE IN THE POPULATION IN PARIS, BUT TO THE FACT THAT IT WAS FELT THE POPULATION WOULD BE BETTER REPRESENTED AS A WHOLE BY HAVING MORE MUNICIPAL COUNSELORS.. SINCE THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ITSELF DECIDED ON WHAT PRO-CONFIDENTIAL

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PORTION THE INCREASE WOULD TAKE, IT COMES AS NO SURPRISE THAT DESPITE ADVANCES OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT IN THE 1973 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, THE 1974 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND THE 1976 CANTONAL ELECTIONS, THE INCREASE IN MUNICIPAL COUNSELORS FROM THOSE SECTORS NOW HELD BY THE LEFT HAS NOT REALLY KEPT PACE WITH THE INCREASE OF THE LEFT IN PARIS AS A WHOLE.

3. CURRENT PREDICTIONS: POLLS ARE SHOWING THE LEFT TAKING SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 42 AND 46 SEATS ON THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL. THE RPR WOULD PRESUMABLY TAKE ABOUT THE SAME NUMBER OF SEATS AND THE IR/CENTRISTS COALITION 20-22 SEATS. THERE ARE THREE ROUNDS OF VOTING. FOR A MAYOR TO BE ELECTED ON THE FIRST OR SECOND ROUND HE MUST RECEIVE AT LEAST 55 OF THE 109 VOTES CAST. IF NO COUNSELOR RECEIVES THIS NUMBER OF VOTES ON EITHER THE FIRST OR SECOND BALLOT, THE CHAIR OF MAYOR GOES TO THE CANDIDATE WHO RECEIVES A SIMPLE MAJORITY OVER ALL COMPETITORS IN THE THIRD ROUND OF VOTING. IF THE RPR IN AND OF ITSELF

OUTWEIGHS THE UNION OF THE LEFT IN THE NEWLY ELECTED

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MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, JACQUES CHIRAC'S CHANCES OF BEING ELECTED MAYOR -- EVEN IF THE VOTE IS BLOCKED ON THE FIRST TWO ROUNDS -- ARE EXCELLENT. BUT IN THE CURRENT ATMOSPHERE OF MISTRUST, BETRAYAL AND IN SOME CASES EVEN HATRED, A NUMBER OF SITUATIONS COULD OCCUR DEPENDING ON THE POLITICAL CLIMATE OF THE MOMENT AND THE RESULTS OF THE PARIS ELECTIONS.

A. IN A BLOCKED-VOTE SITUATION SOME CENTRIST AND/OR INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN MUNICIPAL COUNSELORS WHO ARE KNOWN TO LOATHE JACQUES CHIRAC EVEN MORE THAN THE LEFT, COULD SWITCH ALLEGIANCE,-- AND VOTE FOR THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE ON THE THIRD ROUND. THE ELECTION OF AN OPPOSITION MAYOR IN PARIS, WHICH IS UNLIKELY, WOULD HAVE A DEVASTATING EFFECT ON THE PRESIDENT'S IMAGE AND AUTHORITY AND COULD CONCEIVABLY BRING ABOUT EARLY LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS OR EVEN PUT THE TENURE OF GISCARD HIMSELF IN THE
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ELYSEE IN QUESTION.

B. SOME MODERATE OPPOSITION COUNCILLORS (NON-CERES AND NON-PC), MIGHT VOTE FOR THE IR/CENTRIST CANDIDATE (D'ORNANO IF HE IS ELECTED) TO THE MAYORALTY. THIS WOULD BE JUST TO SPITE CHIRAC, WHOM THE PS VIEWS AS ITS GREATEST THREAT. THE RESULT WOULD BE A MAJOR SETBACK FOR CHIRAC AND BY EXTENSION FOR THE RPR AS A WHOLE.

C. STILL ASSUMING THAT THE TOTAL OF CHIRAC'S SUPPORTERS IS LESS THAN THOSE OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT COMBINED AND THAT THE VOTING HITS THE THIRD ROUND WITH CENTRISTS AND IRS REFUSING TO BRING THEIR SUPPORT TO CHIRAC, THE LEFT CANDIDATE WOULD BE ELECTED MAYOR BY DEFAULT, THEREBY BRINGING ABOUT THE SAME RESULT AS POINT A ABOVE. ON THE OTHER HAND WERE CHIRAC TO RECEIVE MORE VOTES THAN THE COMBINED LEFT, HE HIMSELF WOULD BE ELECTED MAYOR IN SUCH A SITUATION BY DEFAULT.

4. CHIRAC'S THE MAN: THE MOST LIKELY SITUATION, HOWEVER, AS THINGS NOW STAND IS THAT CHIRAC WILL BE ELECTED FIRST MAYOR OF PARIS. THE MOMENTUM GOING FOR HIM, THE POLITICAL CLOUD HE WIELDS AND THE IMAGE HE HAS ACQUIRED IN THE MINDS OF THE PARIS ELECTORATE MAKES HIM A NEARLY SURE BET, AND THIS DESPITE RECENT POLLS THAT SHOW A DROP IN HIS POPULARITY. NOW THAT THE SMOKE HAS CLEARED AND THAT BOTH CHIRAC AND D'ORNANO HAVE EVINced THEIR DETERMINATION TO STAY IN THE RACE, EVEN THE COMBINED MIGHT OF THE ELYSEE AND MATIGNON SEEMS UNLIKELY TO PROVE A BARRIER TO THE FORMER'S CHANCES OF SUCCESS. THERE IS NATURALLY THE STILL CONSIDERABLE LEVERAGE THAT THE IR COUNCILLORS WILL BE ABLE TO EXERCISE WHEN IT COMES TIME TO VOTE FOR THE MAYOR; THEY COULD FOR EXAMPLE SAY TO CHIRAC, "EITHER YOU STEP DOWN AND LET US PUT A COMPROMISE CANDIDATE OR WE WILL BE UNABLE TO ACCOUNT FOR THE VOTES OF MANY OF OUR OWN COUNCILLORS." IT HAS NEVER BEEN A PARTICULARLY CLEAN GAME AT THE HOTEL DE VILLE AND

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SUCH A THREAT WOULD BE RIGHT IN KEEPING WITH THE LIKES OF IR MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR JACQUES DOMINATI AND COMPANY. IT IS TRUE ON THE OTHER HAND THAT CHIRAC COULD TURN ABOUT AND SAY, "YOU EITHER VOTE FOR ME OR THE RPR WILL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT WHEN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OPENS FOR ITS SPRING SESSION." THIS TOO WOULD BE IN KEEPING WITH SUCH HARD HITTERS AS PIERRE BAS AND

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CHRISTIAN DE LA MALENE, WHO ARE BOTH COUNCILLORS AND DEPUTIES. ONE IMPORTANT FACT TO REMEMBER IN ALL THIS IS THAT THE MAYOR OF PARIS WILL NOT BE ELECTED BY PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION BUT INDIRECT SUFFRAGE. THEREFORE WHILE THE LARGEST SINGLE PARTY IN PARIS MAY BE SOCIALIST, THE FIRST MAYOR NEED NOT NECESSARILY BE SO.

5. THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS: IN A LULL FOLLOWING A STORM WHOSE VIOLENCE HAS SURPRISED AND DISMAYED PARIS MAJORITY CIRCLES, CHIRAC AND D'ORNANO ARE NOW BEGINNING TO APPLY THEMSELVES TO THE CAMPAIGN AT HAND AND TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED. D'ORNANO WHOSE CHANCES ARE SLIGHT INDEED, IS PROMISING TO GIVE HIMSELF OVER TO A BETTER RUNNING OF THE CITY AND HAS SAID HE WILL IMMEDIATELY RETIRE FROM HIS MINISTERIAL POST IF ELECTED. CHIRAC WILL FORMALLY OPEN HIS CAMPAIGN WITH A PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE FIRST OF FEBRUARY, AGAIN
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STRESSING THE NEED FOR CAPABLE ADMINISTRATION IN THE MOST IMPORTANT CITY IN FRANCE. IT IS WELL TO RECALL THAT CHIRAC'S DECISION TO RUN WAS BASED ON A SECTOR BY SECTOR STUDY OF THE SITUATION IN PARIS, FROM WHICH HE CONCLUDED THAT WITHOUT HIS PERSONAL SUPPORT, THE RPR STOOD TO LOSE ITS FIEFDOM OF 20 YEARS IN THE TOWN HALL. HE HIMSELF HAS ADMITTED THAT IN GISCARD'S PLACE HE WOULD HAVE TRIED TO DO THE SAME THING (GET THE RPR OUT OF PARIS). MOST OBSERVERS NOW AGREE THAT THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION WILL BE A DIRECT PRECURSOR OF THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AND THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE MUNICIPALS WILL HAVE A DIRECT INFLUENCE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE LEGISLATIVES. THUS CHIRAC IS TELLING THE TRUTH WHEN HE UNDERSCORES THE VITAL NEED TO "WIN" THE FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL BATTLES, TO DEFEAT THE LEFT. AND IN PARIS WHERE THE MAJORITY HAD OUTWEIGHED THE OPPOSITION SINCE THE ADVENT OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC, IT WOULD APPEAR CHIRAC IS SPEAKING THE RIGHT KIND OF LANGUAGE. THE PARIS ELECTION WILL PROVE OR DISPROVE THE ARGUMENT THAT GISCARD CANNOT KEEP THE LEFT FROM COMING TO NATIONAL POWER WITHOUT CHIRAC'S HELP.

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